

State of California  
Regional Water Quality Control Board  
San Diego Region

EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT  
November 12, 2003

ITEM: 14

SUBJECT: Waste Discharge Requirements: California Dept. of Parks and Recreation, Crystal Cove State Park, El Morro Trailer Park, Orange County (tentative Order No. R9-2003-0228).  
*(Victor Vasquez)*

PURPOSE: To adopt waste discharge requirements for the discharge of treated wastewater effluent through subsurface disposal systems from the El Morro Trailer Park, Crystal Cove State Park, Orange County.

PUBLIC NOTICE: The November 12, 2003 Regional Board meeting agenda notice that was sent on October 24, 2003 served as the required 10-day official public notification for this action. Tentative drafts of the Order, including the draft monitoring and reporting program (M&RP), were mailed on October 3, 2003 to the discharger and all known interested parties and agencies for review and comment. Copies of the tentative Order and M&RP have been made available for public review at the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board office.

DISCUSSION: The El Morro Trailer Park (EMTP) is a private mobile home community located within Crystal Cove State Park, along both sides of and immediately adjacent to the Pacific Coast Highway (PCH), just east of the Orange County coastline of the Pacific Ocean, and north of the City of Laguna Beach. EMTP consists of 229 mobile homes located on the east side of PCH and 71 mobile homes and one cottage located on the west side of PCH. Mobile homes located on the west side of PCH are immediately adjacent to Crystal Cove State Park Beach. EMTP is on land leased jointly to El Morro Village, Inc (EMVI) and individual residents from the State of California through the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). The El Morro Community Association represents the residents of EMTP. The Regional Board has been informed by DPR that the leases will expire in December 2004, after which the DPR has plans to convert the EMTP site to overnight campsites open to the public.

Wastewater from EMTP is currently treated via septic tanks and discharged via subsurface vertical seepage pits to land along Moro

Canyon Creek in the eastern portion of EMTP and via leach lines to land adjacent to Crystal Cove State Park Beach in the western portion of EMTP. The wastewater treatment and disposal systems at EMTP were installed in stages beginning possibly as early as 1947 through 1986. These systems constitute community sewerage systems; however, the discharge from EMTP had not been previously regulated by the Regional Board. All wastewater discharges from the wastewater treatment facilities at EMTP are located within the Moro Canyon watershed, a sub-basin of the San Joaquin Hills Hydrologic Sub-Area (HSA 901.11) of the Laguna Hydrologic Area (HA 901.10) of the San Juan Hydrologic Unit (HU 901.00). The current tentative waste discharge requirements being considered for the EMTP wastewater discharge will be issued to DPR as the primary responsible party.

The available information indicates that the discharge in the eastern portion of EMTP eventually surfaces and contributes the majority of the perennial surface water flow in Moro Canyon Creek downgradient from the disposal fields. However, the water quality of the creek, with the exception of bacteria levels, appears to meet Basin Plan objectives. The high indicator bacteria levels observed near the mouth of the creek have not been attributed to the wastewater discharge and may be due to wildlife found in or in the vicinity of the creek. Furthermore, bacterial levels in ocean recreational waters adjacent to Crystal Cove State Park Beach do not appear to be impacted by the discharge from EMTP; these ocean waters, however, are within the Irvine Coast Marine Life Refuge Area of Special Biological Significance.

The effluent limitations and other provisions of tentative Waste Discharge Requirements (WDR) Order No. R9-2003-0228 are based principally on the 1994 Water Quality Control Plan for the San Diego Basin (Basin Plan). Specifically, the requirements enforce the water quality objectives and the municipal and domestic supply beneficial use designations for groundwater in the San Joaquin Hills HSA. The discharge specifications require that the water quality of the EMTP discharge meet the groundwater water quality objectives at the time that the effluent reaches the groundwater water table because of the lack of assimilative capacity in the groundwater or because of observed low water quality in the groundwater downgradient of the sewage disposal fields. The Monitoring and Reporting Program of tentative Order No. R9-2003-0228 includes requirements to monitor effluent quality, groundwater quality, surface water quality, and proper maintenance and operation of the sewage disposal facility in order to ensure protection of water quality.

As written, the septic tank effluent water quality does not comply with the discharge specifications for total nitrogen; however, these discharge specifications are appropriate to meet the nitrate water quality objective and protect water quality and beneficial uses of the groundwaters of the San Joaquin Hills HSA. Additionally, the existing EMTP wastewater treatment facilities are not properly operating as constructed and lack required flood protections. Tentative Cease and Desist Order No. R9-2003-0285 (see Item No. 15) is being proposed in conjunction with this item in order to provide DPR additional time to bring the EMTP discharge and wastewater treatment facilities in compliance with the requirements of tentative Order No. R9-2003-0228. The Cease and Desist Order (CDO) includes a time schedule that would allow DPR to identify and implement plans to comply with all requirements of tentative Order No. R9-2003-0228 within 22 months.

DPR has indicated that the EMTP subsurface discharge will be terminated when the EMTP leases expire in December 2004. At that time, DPR plans to convert the site to state park facilities connected to a municipal sewer system. However, if these DPR plans are delayed or not implemented, the tentative WDR and CDO, if adopted, will continue to ensure protection of water quality and the beneficial uses of waters of the State.

Written comments concerning tentative Order No. R9-2003-0228 and tentative Cease and Desist Order No. R9-2003-0285 have been received from DPR, the El Morro Community Association, Questa Engineering Corporation, Mr. Wayne Rosenbaum, and the Surfrider Foundation. The comments have been considered and commented upon. Responses to these comments have been prepared and sent to the interested parties. An errata sheet has been prepared containing proposed revisions to the tentative Order in response to one of the comments received. The revision changes the discharge flowrate limitations from daily maximum limitations to calendar monthly average limitations.

LEGAL CONCERNS: None.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

1. Tentative Order No. R9-2003-0228 including Monitoring and Reporting Program No. 2003-0228.
2. Transmittal letter dated October 3, 2003.
3. Site Map.
4. El Morro Community Association letter dated October 16, 2003

5. El Morro Community Association report entitled "Exhibits to October 16, 2003 letter to Brian Kelley San Diego Regional water Quality Control Board"
6. California Department of Parks and Recreation letter dated October 29, 2003
7. Questa Engineering Corporation letter dated October 28, 2003
8. Letter from Mr. Wayne Rosenbaum dated November 5, 2003
9. Surfrider Foundation letter dated October 31, 2003
10. Regional Board staff responses to comments
11. Errata Sheet containing proposed revisions to Tentative Order No. R9-2003-0228
12. Transmittal letter dated November 7, 2003 for Responses to Comments and Errata Sheet

COMPLIANCE RECORD: Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATION: The adoption of tentative Order No. R9-2003-0228 is recommended.